

As soon as the last cargo chute touches down the men begin to retrieve their gear and equipment. This task would normally take a crew this size about 15 minutes to complete, but because they were dropped from such a high altitude and the cargo chutes are scattered across the upper end of the gulch, it takes the crew 45 minutes to an hour to gather up the parachutes and pack the cargo packs to a central location Dodge has selected near the bottom of the drainage. This extra 30-45 minutes becomes critical time lost in their race with the fire later that afternoon.

At about 5:00 PM Foreman Dodge instructs the crew to grab a bite to eat, get some water, gather their hand tools and follow him up the south side of the canyon to the fire on the ridge. He tells them he's going to go up to the fire and tie in with the guy who has been yelling and whistling (Jim Harrison).

Leaving the crew under Bill Hellman's command, Dodge drops into the drainage bottom and then heads up the hill for the ridgeline and the fire. Though the timber is quite thick, Dodge is able to contact Jim Harrison in short order. But, once on the fireline Dodge is concerned about how actively the fire is burning. He makes a quick assessment and instructs Harrison to follow him and join the rest of the crew. Dodge and Harrison then retrace Dodge's route heading back to the cargo assembly area near the draw bottom. However, when they are about half-way down the slope they encounter the rest of the jumper crew headed up to the fire with Hellman in the lead.

Dodge explains to Hellman that he doesn't like the looks of things on the ridge and instructs Hellman to take the crew and head them down the gulch to the Missouri River. His thinking is to attack the fire from the rear and the safety of the river. Dodge adds that he and Harrison are going to proceed on to the cargo spot to get water and something to eat.

While all this is taking place, Jansson and Hersey have been busy organizing their small force of 19 firefighters and getting them transported from Helena to the Gates of the Mountains Boat Club launch and then down river. On his first trip down the river Jansson decides the mouth of Mann Gulch is no place for a firecamp and moves the location to Meriwether. Here he quickly sets up a camp and dispatches Hersey and the 19 men to the fire and the top of the ridge. He is concerned about Jim Harrison's whereabouts since Jim was supposed to report in on the radio at 3:00 PM and no one has heard from him. Jansson assumes---correctly it turns out---that Harrison has tied in with the smokejumper crew.

At about 5:02 PM, after several vain attempts to scout out the fire from several locations in a boat on the river, Jansson is dropped at the mouth of Mann Gulch and begins to hike up the drainage bottom to both see where the fire is burning and to try to make contact with the jumpers. He proceeds up the draw bottom several hundred yards and encounters the fire. Somewhat foolishly it turns out, Jansson picks his way through the burning trees, brush and grass and continues up the draw. In the midst of the conflagration he thinks he hears someone shouting and pushes on until finally the heat and smoke are just too much. He turns around only to find he appears to be trapped in the flames and smoke. Knowing his only escape is back towards the river, Jansson runs and dives through the dense smoke and fire. He makes it through but then passes out for a few minutes, probably from smoke inhalation. He comes to, is immediately sick and then vomits violently. After a few moments he gets back to his feet and picks his way through the fire back to the boat still waiting for him at the river. He is returned to the firecamp at Meriwether.